



Choice Scholarship Program Frequently Asked Questions for Participating Schools 2016-2017 School Year

General Questions

1) What is the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program?

Choice Scholarships, sometimes referred to as vouchers, provide State funding to qualifying students that can be used to offset tuition costs at participating schools. Students qualify based on student eligibility criteria and household income.

2) Who administers the Choice Scholarship Program?

The Indiana Department of Education, Office of School Finance, administers the Choice Scholarship Program.

3) Where do parents/guardians of students apply for the Choice Scholarship Program?

Parents and students apply at a participating school.

4) When can parents/guardians of students apply for the program?

The application window for the 2016-2017 school year opens on February 26, 2016 and closes on September 1, 2016.

5) Which schools participate in the Choice Scholarship Program?

A list of participating schools can be found on the program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice.

6) How does my school become a participating Choice School?

All schools must complete an updated version of the *Application to become and Eligible School*. This form is available on the Choice Scholarship website at: www.doe.in.gov/choice. At the time of application, schools must provide a copy of the school's admissions policy and the tuition and fees policy and rates for the 2016-2017 school year. Schools not accredited by the Department must provide proof of accreditation. Applications may be submitted as a pdf by email to choiceschool@doe.in.gov or by hard copy to:

Indiana Department of Education
Office of School Finance
115 W. Washington St.
South Tower, Suite 600
Indianapolis, IN 46204

7) How many years has the program been in existence?

The program has been in place for five years beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

Eligibility Questions

1) What are the eligibility requirements for a Choice Scholarship?

There are two components to determining eligibility:

1. Student eligibility criteria; and
2. Household income limits.

2) What are the student eligibility criteria?

To be eligible, a student must satisfy each of the following requirements:

1. Have legal settlement in Indiana
2. Be between the ages of 5 and 22 no later than August 1 of the school year
3. Be accepted for enrollment into a participating Choice Scholarship School

After satisfying the requirements listed above, there are seven different pathways that enable a student to become eligible to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program. The seven pathways, labeled 1 through 7, are outlined below. A student must satisfy **ONLY ONE** of the seven pathways to be eligible.

1. Continuing Choice Scholarship Student Pathway

- i. The student received a Choice Scholarship in the school year that immediately precedes the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship, and
- ii. The student is required to have remained enrolled at the Choice School for the entirety of the immediately preceding school year, and
- iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 200% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

2. Previous Choice Scholarship Student Pathway

EITHER:

- i. The student received a Choice Scholarship in a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship; OR
- ii. The student received a Choice Scholarship in the immediately preceding school year but the student exited the Choice School prior to the end of the school year;

AND:

- iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

3. Previous Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Award Pathway

- i. The student received an SGO Scholarship in a previous school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship.
- ii. The five approved Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) are:
 - ☐ Institute for Quality Education (formerly Educational Choice Charitable Trust)
 - ☐ School Scholarship Granting Organization of Northeast Indiana
 - ☐ Tuition Assistance Fund of Southwestern Indiana

- ☐ Sagamore Institute Scholarships for Education Choice
- ☐ The Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization of Indiana
- iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

4. Special Education Pathway

- i. The student has a disability that requires special education and related services;
- ii. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) pursuant to IC 20-35 or a Service Plan (SP) pursuant to 511 IAC 7-34 has been developed for the student; and,
- iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 200% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

5. “F” Public School Pathway

- i. The student would be required to attend a specific public school based on their residence that has been assigned an “F” grade. Note: This pathway does not require prior attendance at the school, and
- ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

6. Two Semesters in Public School Pathway

- i. The student was enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school, including a charter school, in Indiana for at least two semesters immediately preceding the first semester for which the individual receives a Choice Scholarship, and
- ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

7. Sibling Pathway

- i. The sibling of the newly applying student received either a Choice Scholarship or an SGO Scholarship in a preceding school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship, and
- ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

3) Can kindergarten students apply for a Choice Scholarship?

Yes, a parent/guardian of a kindergarten student may apply for a Choice Scholarship provided that the child satisfies eligibility and household income criteria.

4) If a child attends a public school for kindergarten, can this count toward the two semesters in public school requirement?

Yes, kindergarten attendance may satisfy the Two Semesters in Public School Pathway requirement.



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5) If a student is withdrawn from a public school and entered into a Choice School, are they still eligible for the Two Semesters in a Public School Pathway?

The student must be present during both the Fall and Spring count dates in the semesters immediately preceding the school year in which the student applies for the Choice Scholarship to be eligible under the Two Semesters in Public School Pathway.

6) Which A through F grades will be used to determine the F schools for eligibility purposes for the 2016-2017 Choice Scholarship Program?

The A through F grades issued in January of 2016 for school performance in the 2014-2015 school year will be used to determine the F schools for eligibility purposes for the 2016-2017 Choice Scholarship Program.

7) What does the term “sibling” mean for purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program?

For purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program, the term “sibling” shall mean one of two or more individuals having one or both parents, guardians or custodians in common. The term does not require a consanguineous (blood) relationship between the individuals.

8) When did the sibling of a student attempting to qualify under the Sibling Pathway have to receive a Choice Scholarship or SGO Award for the sibling to be eligible?

To be eligible under the Sibling Pathway, the student’s sibling had to receive a Choice Scholarship or SGO Award in any previous year.

9) What are the household income limits?

The income guidelines for the 2016-2017 school year are posted on the Choice Scholarship Program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice.

10) Is the household income of the foster parent included when determining whether the foster child is eligible to receive a Choice Scholarship?

No. Because foster children are directly certified for the free and reduced school lunch program, they satisfy the income eligibility requirements to qualify for a Choice Scholarship. Official documentation of the student’s current foster status must be kept in his/her file.

If your household includes biological or adopted children in addition to foster children, payments received for serving as a foster parent will not be included in the household income calculation for purposes of determining eligibility for the biological or adopted children

11) What counts as income and who should be included in the household size?

For questions about determining income and household size, please view the income verification document posted on the Choice Scholarship Program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice.

12) Can children be included in the household size if parents are separated or claimed in alternating years?

Yes, provided that the parent claiming the child has full or joint custody of the child or children and supporting legal documentation.

13) If a student transfers to a Choice School from a public school, how would his/her eligibility in IHSAA-sanctioned events be affected?

A student's eligibility to participate in Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) sanctioned events is strictly controlled by IHSAA's bylaws which are available at:

<http://www.ihsaa.org/AboutIHSAA/ByLaws/tabid/91/Default.aspx>. This is true regardless of whether a student attends a public or nonpublic school. If a student athlete is concerned about how a transfer to or from a Choice School will affect their ability to participate in athletics, the student should consult IHSAA's bylaws.

Application Process

1) Who is responsible for determining whether a student is eligible for a Choice Scholarship?

The participating Choice Scholarship School is responsible for determining whether the student meets the eligibility guidelines. As part of being "eligible", the participating school must have enrolled (or agree to enroll) the student and may do so on the condition of the student receiving a Choice Scholarship Award.

2) How is the amount of the Choice Scholarship award determined?

The award is the lesser of:

1. Tuition and fees at the Choice School; or,
2. An amount based off the per-student State funding formula for the student's school corporation of residence, determined as follows:
 - 90% of the funding formula amount if the family income falls within 100% of the reduced school lunch eligibility.
 - 50% of the funding formula amount if the family income is above 100% but under 150% of the reduced school lunch eligibility.
 - 50% of the funding formula amount if the family income is above 100% but under 200% of the reduced school lunch eligibility if the student is a Continuing Choice Scholarship Student or if the student has an IEP (Individual Education Plan).

3) Is the parent/guardian of the student required to be present when the scholarship is filed?

No. However, it is highly recommended as the parent/guardian is required to attest to the accuracy of the information that is filed and his/her signature is required on the documents.

4) Where can I review the per-student State funding for the corporation of residence?

This information is available on the Choice Scholarship Program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice.

5) Can a parent/guardian of a student apply to the Indiana Department of Education for a Choice Scholarship Award?

No. A parent/guardian, applying on behalf of a child, must apply for a Choice Scholarship at a participating Choice Scholarship School. The school will electronically submit the student's application to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to determine whether or not the student is eligible for an award.

6) How will families be notified of their award?

The school will print the Award Letter for the family at the time the application is approved.



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7) Can a parent/guardian of a student submit an application to multiple schools?

A student can only have one application submitted to one school at a time. If a parent/guardian wishes to apply at a different school, the parent/guardian must withdraw the student's application at the original choice school and submit an application at the preferred Choice School. After the September 1 application deadline, no further changes are allowed.

8) Can Choice Scholarships be used to take individual courses for credit?

No. Choice Scholarships may only be used when the student is taking the full academic program of the eligible school.

Tuition and Fees

1) What should be included in the tuition and fees policy for the Choice School Application?

A copy of the school's tuition and fees policy, including all discounts that may be applied, needs to be included in the Choice School Application. For example, multi-child and employee discount amounts should be included in the tuition and fees policy.

2) Can a participating school charge tuition and fees in addition to what is covered by the Choice Scholarship Award?

Yes. The parent/guardian is responsible for any tuition and fees that the participating school charges beyond the Choice Scholarship amount. Parents should carefully read any agreement they sign with the school. The school's policies may include language requiring payment regardless of whether a Choice Scholarship is awarded. A Choice Scholarship School should not charge Choice Scholarship Students additional fees and costs that are not routinely charged to non-Choice eligible students.

3) Can an activity fee be charged and included in tuition and fees?

Yes, an activity fee can be charged and included in tuition and fees. However, this fee should be specifically outlined in your tuition and fees schedule and apply to all students, not just Choice Students.

4) Will the Choice School receive additional funding if a Choice Student receives special education services?

The parent/guardian of an eligible special education student will designate either the Choice School or the public school corporation as the special education service provider. If a family selects the Choice School as the service provider, the Choice School may be eligible to receive the state special education funding allocated for that student. This funding is to be used to provide special education services for the eligible student.

For more information on the Choice Scholarship Program and special education, please review the Choice Scholarship and Special Education Services FAQ available at: www.doe.in.gov/choice

5) Is there a limit of Choice Scholarship awards each school year?

No, there is no limit to the number of scholarships that can be awarded each year.



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- 6) **Would State textbook subsidies either affect or be affected by the value of a Choice Scholarship?**
No, provided that the free/reduced school lunch student receiving textbook reimbursement from the State does not also have the cost of textbooks included in the “tuition and fees” amount covered by the voucher. In other words, a double-dip of State funds must be avoided.
- 7) **Will my participating school be required to submit our tuition and fee policies to the IDOE?**
Schools are required to submit their tuition and fees policies to the IDOE at the time they apply or reapply to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program.
- 8) **What constitutes “tuition and fees”?**
The term has different meanings in different schools. The tuition and fees amount input on a student’s application must be the amount this specific student would otherwise be obligated to pay if the student did not receive the Choice Scholarship.

Attendance and Payment Process

- 1) **Can a student receive a Choice Scholarship after the school year has already begun?**
To be awarded a Choice Scholarship for the current school year, a complete application must be submitted for the student by the September 1 application deadline and the student must be fully enrolled and expected in attendance at the Choice School on the September Count Day.
- 2) **If a student receives a Choice Scholarship Award and then decides to transfer within the same school year, what happens to the Choice Scholarship?**
As a condition of participation in the program, the IDOE requires schools to report the student as exiting on their Enrollment and Mobility (EM) Report within five business days of the student’s withdrawal. If a payment for the student has already been made, the IDOE will contact the school to collect a prorated refund for the portion of the school year the student is not attending the Choice School. If the payment has not yet been made, it will be prorated by the IDOE to reflect the student’s enrollment at the Choice School.
- 3) **Can a student transfer to a different Choice School and retain their Choice Scholarship?**
No. The Choice Scholarship is school specific. The student cannot change schools during the school year and use a Choice Scholarship to attend the second school. If the student changes schools after the September 1 application deadline, the student will forfeit the remaining amount of the Choice Scholarship.
- 4) **Can a student who has withdrawn from their Choice School return to the same Choice School at a later date in the school year and continue to receive their Choice Scholarship Award?**
No, if a student is withdrawn and is reported as exiting on the Enrollment and Mobility Report in compliance with the five day requirement, the student forfeits the remaining portion of their Choice Scholarship Award, even if the student later returns to the same Choice School. Schools are encouraged to communicate to families that at the time the student is withdrawn, the student is no longer eligible to receive Choice Scholarship Award funds for the remainder of the school year in which the student was withdrawn.
- 5) **How will the payment process work?**
The parent/guardian plays a very important role in the payment process. The Choice Scholarship Award is designated directly to the participating school on the student’s behalf. At the time of application, the Choice



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School will download and print an Endorsement Form. The parent/guardian must sign and date the Endorsement Form. The Choice School will upload this form before October 11, 2016. This Endorsement Form will instruct the State to provide payment to the school on the student's behalf. Without the completed Endorsement Form, the State will not make a payment for that student. There are three Endorsement Form periods throughout the school year; two for the regular Choice Scholarship payments and one for the special education payment.

6) What happens to the payment if the student is withdrawn before the school year is over? Are there any costs to the family beyond what is covered by the Choice Scholarship?

The Choice Scholarship Award is a year-long award. When a student is withdrawn from the participating school, the Choice Scholarship amount is prorated down to the number of days that the student was enrolled at the Choice School. For example, if the school year for XYZ School is 180 days and Student A was enrolled in the school for 45 days then withdrew, Student A would have been enrolled for 25% of the school year. If Student A's Choice Scholarship Award was \$4,000, 25% or \$1,000 would be paid to the participating school on the student's behalf.

Knowing the participating school's policies concerning student withdrawal and tuition payment is important. Individual school policies vary and may require that tuition and fee costs be paid for the full month for which the student withdraws or even for the full semester. The family is responsible for the discrepancy in tuition charges resulting from the State's system of prorating payments down to the day and the participating school's withdrawal and tuition payment policies.

7) How often will State payments be made?

At a minimum, Choice Scholarship payments will be made twice per year, once each semester.

School Scholarship Tax Credit (SGO) Program

1) What is the SGO Scholarship?

The program provides a 50% state tax credit for contributions made to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs), which offer scholarships to low and middle income children to attend private schools of their choice. For more information about the SGO Scholarship please see the link below:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/choice/school-scholarships>.

2) Can a student who receives a Choice Scholarship also receive a SGO Scholarship?

Yes. A student who meets the requirements for a Choice Scholarship could qualify for a SGO Scholarship as well, provided that the combination of the two amounts does not exceed tuition and fees at a participating school.

School Policies

1) Does my participating school need to remove its religion classes and/or religious affiliation to qualify?

No. Participation in the Choice Scholarship Program does not require schools to remove religion classes or alter their religious affiliation.



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2) How would this program affect my school's admissions policy?

Participating schools are not allowed to set admission standards for Choice Scholarship Students that are different than the standards used for the rest of their students.

3) What are the rules for the lottery?

For additional discussion on the lottery requirement, please review the 'Getting Started' document at: www.doe.in.gov/choice.

4) If a student received a Choice Scholarship in the previous school year and changes schools for the upcoming school year, is that student still subject to the lottery requirement?

Yes—unless the student is a sibling of a current student at the new school.

5) What if we admit a student, receive the State payment, and determine later in the year that we must expel the student for academic, disciplinary or other reasons?

The school must notify the Department within five days if a student is withdrawn from the school by submitting an updated Enrollment and Mobility (EM) report. If a student attends less than a full school year, the IDOE will prorate the amount of the voucher and request a refund.

6) Are there legal requirements beyond those listed in the legislation and/or described above?

Yes. These include the following:

- Notification of the department when an employee with a department-issued license is convicted of certain felonies (IC 20-28-5-8)
- Expanded criminal history checks for all applicants for employment who will have "direct, ongoing contact with children." (IC 20-26-5-10)
- Parental access to student records (IC 20-33-7)

7) Will my school be bound by the new teacher evaluation requirements? What exactly will that entail?

Yes. This requirement took effect for the 2012-2013 school year. Schools that accept SGO Students but do not participate in the Choice Scholarship Program **are not** bound by this requirement.

House Enrolled Act 1004 (Public Law 172) includes the language making IC 20-28-11.5-4(a) and (b) in Senate Enrolled Act 1 apply to Choice Scholarship Schools. These schools will be required to conduct annual performance evaluations of all individuals providing instruction to students, including principals. Participating schools are free to use the model evaluation tool being developed by the department, the system for Teacher and Student Advancement (i.e. the TAP model), or the Peer Assistance & Review model. They may also develop their own local evaluation and/or utilize master teachers in their building to conduct the evaluation. The IDOE has included an assurance on the Choice Scholarship School Application Form (to the IDOE) that this requirement will be fulfilled.

Accreditation

1) If my school is not accredited by the State Board, what national/regional accrediting entities are recognized by the Board?

The State Board currently recognizes eight accrediting entities for purposes of participating in the Choice Scholarship Program. The recognized accrediting entities are the following:

1. Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASDAS)

2. American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)
3. Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
4. Christian Schools International (CSI)
5. Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)
6. International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA)
7. National Lutheran Schools Accreditation (NLSA)
8. North Central Association (NCA) / AdvancED

IDOE Oversight

1) I noticed that the legislation allows the IDOE to make “random visits” to eligible schools. When will these occur and what will be the focus?

The IDOE is required to visit at least 5% of participating schools annually. The visits will take place throughout the school year. Schools that are being visited will be notified in advance of the visit and Department staff will work with the school to identify an agreeable date for the visit. The visit will focus on the requirements of IC 20-51-4.

2) Does the DOE do random financial audits?

Yes. If your school is chosen for an audit, you will be required to submit all of required documents for each student at your school who has been awarded a Choice Scholarship.

The list of required documents are:

- School Documents:
 - Admissions Policy
 - Tuition and Fees Policy
 - Completed Audit Student Roster
- Student Documents (included for each student on Choice Scholarship Roster):
 - Household Audit Cover Sheet for Each Participating Household
 - Income Eligibility Documentation
 - Corporation of Legal Settlement Verification
 - Parent Assurance Forms
 - Review Previous SGO, Sibling, and F School Pathway Eligibility
 - Special Education Service Provider Selection Form
 - Choice Scholarship Application Summary and Sign Off Form

Accountability

1) What data will be used for A-F ratings?

The data used for A-F will include the following:

- ISTEP scores (these scores will be considered both for student growth and student achievement);
- End-of-Course Assessment scores in Algebra 1 and English 10;
- Graduation rates;
- Student-level Advanced Placement scores; (this will require a signature on a standard waiver form that authorizes College Board to release this data to the Department; please send an email to ChoiceSchool@doe.in.gov to obtain a copy of this waiver for signature);
- Dual credits awarded;
- Industry certifications for Career and Technical Education programs/pathways (provided to the Department of Education via the Indiana Department of Workforce Development);
- While not an explicit part of the A-F ratings, students who do not already have a state-issued Student Test Number (STN) must be assigned one as part of the Choice Scholarship Program. The



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STN helps the state protect against duplicate state payments (both to public and nonpublic schools), improves test security, and allows tracking of student performance over time. Personally-identifiable information is used only to ensure that individual students do not have multiple STNs, and the process itself improves protection of privacy.

2) Will my school's A-F grade be public? How will it affect my school's eligibility?

All school grades—traditional public, public charter, state-accredited nonpublic, and Choice Scholarship-Participating Schools—will be publicly reported.

3) How will my school's A-F grade affect my school's eligibility to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program?

As specified in IC 20-51-4-9, A-F grades will affect a participating Choice Scholarship School in the following manner:

- A school rated as F for two consecutive years will receive a one-year suspension from accepting new Choice Scholarship students.
- A school rated D or E for three consecutive years cannot accept new scholarship students until receiving a C or higher for two consecutive years.
- A school rated E for three consecutive years cannot accept new scholarship students until receiving a C or higher for three consecutive years.

4) Are there any rules that small schools or new schools should be aware of?

Yes. Because Choice Scholarship Schools are required to be graded under the state A-F system and administer ISTEP, the IDOE must have a statistically valid number of students off which to base the school 'grade.' In order to receive an A-F grade for English or Math performance, a school must have at least **30 students in tested grades** (not necessarily Choice Scholarship Students). This is commonly referred to as the "n-size" requirement.

For example, a school with the following breakdown of student enrollment would meet this standard, since there are 32 students in ISTEP+ grades.

Grade 1: 20
Grade 2: 15
Grade 3: 10
Grade 4: 10
Grade 5: 12

However, a school with the breakdown below would not meet the n-size of 30 students, since Grades 1 and 2 are not tested under the ISTEP+ system.

Grade 1: 40
Grade 2: 25
Grade 3: 5
Grade 4: 5
Grade 5: 5

5) Would a school be disqualified if it does not have 30 students in tested grades?

No. In this scenario, the IDOE can use multiple years of ISTEP+/ECA scores to reach the 30 requirement. For instance, if a school has only 20 tested students for the '11-'12 year, but also administers the ISTEP+/ECA to 15 students in '12-'13, it would meet the standard. The IDOE would aggregate the results from 2012 and 2013 to create an A-F performance grade for English and Math. This approach could also become relevant if the school begins '11-'12 with 31 tested students but loses a few during the school year due to transfers, expulsions etc.

In a 'multiple years' approach, however, the A-F grade assigned once the school hits 30 **will also apply** for the years it did not. For example, if a school receives a D in 2012-2013 when combining the '11-'12 and '12-'13 tested students, that grade will also be applied to the '11-'12 school year. According to the legislation (IC 20-51-4-9), this school would receive a one-year suspension from accepting new Choice Scholarship Students, since the school has effectively received a D for two consecutive years.

6) Can you further explain what n-30 would mean at the high school level?

The n-30—achieved in a single or over multiple school years—would include all students with ECA results for English 10 and Algebra I in the 10th grade cohort. In other words, it would include students in the 10th grade cohort who took the ECA in the year being assessed, and those who took and passed the ECA as 8th or 9th graders in a prior year. Students taking Biology 1 (but not the other two) would not be included.

7) Where did this requirement come from? Does it not exceed the legal authority of the department?

There are multiple places in the Choice Scholarship legislation (curriculum offerings and A-F grading language, especially) making clear that the academic accountability metrics for participating nonpublic schools should be the same as the metrics for public schools.

All public schools, including small schools with n sizes of less than 30, must be assessed annually for state accountability. Public schools with enrollments in tested grades that are below 30 are assessed by aggregating multiple years of data. Setting a minimum n-size of 30 helps to ensure statistical reliability when doing performance calculations. Equally important, just as A-F grades link to high-stakes consequences for public schools (i.e. possible state takeover), the Choice Scholarship legislation links these grades to a school's future ability to accept new Choice Scholarship Students. The 30-student requirement thus creates an important safeguard for these high-stakes consequences.

Assessment

1) Will my school be responsible for the cost of ISTEP+/ECAs?

No. The State will pay these costs. Participating nonpublic schools would be responsible, though, for any purchases—at the State's rate with the vendor—of formative assessments from Wireless Generation (K-2, Language Arts & Math) or Acuity (Grades 3-8, Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies).

2) Are there other ISTEP+ requirements I should be aware of?

Yes. These include:

- The ISTEP statute requires that scores be returned to parents "promptly" (IC 20-32-5-9). With ISTEP+ scores generally returned in early June and ECA scores later in the summer, Choice Scholarship Schools should plan to have someone available to handle these duties.
- Statewide assessment 'examiners' (i.e. the person(s) giving the test) must have a department-issued license (instructional, administrative, or school services); the individual does not necessarily need to be an employee of the school. This requirement is in place to ensure that test security procedures are followed.
- The Department considers test security to be of the utmost importance. State Board rule (511 IAC 5-5) provides the department authority to file civil suit for damages if test integrity procedures are violated. Such action may be in addition to any license suspension/revocation.
- The Indiana Assessment Program Manual is available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment>

3) If my school's accrediting entity does not require assessments such as ISTEP+, ECAs, IREAD-3, etc. would we still be required to administer these tests as a condition of participation?

Yes. Participation in the Choice Scholarship Program requires the school to administer all required assessments (which include but may not be limited to the assessments listed).

4) Are all of my school's students required to take ISTEP+, ECAs, LAS Links, IREAD-3, etc., or just the students who receive Choice Scholarships?

All students in the school who are in assessment tested grades must complete the required assessments. Special Education students or English Learner students may receive testing accommodations if such accommodations are included in their 504 plans (special education students) or Individual Learning Plans (English learner students).

5) Would Choice Scholarship students also be required to take the social studies and science (including Biology 1 ECA) assessments, since only English/Language Arts and Math are factors in A-F grading?

Yes. The Choice Scholarship legislation is very explicit about the ISTEP+ requirement for participation, and that chapter (IC 20-32-5) includes specific reference to science and social studies.

6) What about online testing requirements?

Corporations and nonpublic/charter/Choice schools are required to participate in ISTEP+ Online during the Spring 2015 Multiple-Choice testing window for all grade levels (3-8) at each school, provided the site has the needed equipment and connectivity. Online testing will be optional during the Spring 2015 ISTEP+ Applied Skills and IREAD-3 testing windows.

7) If my school includes Kindergarten through 3rd grade, would we be bound by the state reading plan requirements?

All Choice Scholarship Schools that include Grade 3 must administer the IREAD-3 assessment. Reading **plan** requirements, however, depend on the means of accreditation. For schools accredited by the State Board—regardless of whether they participate in the Choice Scholarship Program—the answer is yes. For schools accredited by a State Board-recognized entity, the answer is no. If a school is accredited by both, the answer is yes. Language in a school's freeway accreditation contract that exempts the school from "curriculum" requirements is not sufficient to exempt a school from the reading plan. For additional information please contact John Wolf (Literacy Specialist) at 317-234-6702 or jwolf@doe.in.gov.

Contact Information

1) How do I contact the Choice Scholarship Program at the Indiana Department of Education?

Please contact the IDOE at choiceschool@doe.in.gov